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C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 004044

SIPDIS

AF FOR DAS YAMAMOTO, USUN FOR EMILY BRUNO FROM CHARGE  
HUDDLESTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2015

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SUBJECT: ERITREAN UNMEE EJECTIONS: THE VIEW FROM ADDIS

REF: ASMARA 01171

Classified By: Charge Vicki Huddleston for reason 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) On December 7, NATO ambassadors met to review with UNMEE deputy Amb. Ennifar the Eritrean decision to order the withdrawal of US, Canadian, European and Russian staff from UNMEE within ten days. Amidst considerable hand-wringing, there was consensus that -- as per reftel -- the international community should "do no harm." There was also consensus on the Indian ambassador's point that it was essential to keep UNMEE in place as a buffer between the two military forces. Most of those present remained convinced that neither nation wants war. Ennifar said that he had met with State Minister Tekeda who again promised that Ethiopia would not start a conflict.

12. (C) The French ambassador wondered if there was some way the international community could communicate to Isaias they would be unable to "save" Eritrea as they had in the past, as Ethiopia would march into Asmara. I said that while we in the field would likely have limited influence on the UNSC's response to Eritrea's actions as they had much wider ramification than just the Eritrea and Ethiopia, I would certainly urge that the UN proceed cautiously given that there remains space for a resolution of this conflict.

13. (C) I spoke separately Dec. 7 with Director of Europe and North America Grum, who said that he wouldn't be surprised if Isaias decided to allow UNMEE to return to full operations 24 hours prior to the sanction deadline. Isaias' rationale for ordering Westerners out, according to Grum, was to force Ethiopia to suspend plans to withdraw troops as ordered by the UNSC, and thus force the UN to sanction Ethiopia. When asked if this meant that the GOE was still committed to re-deploying its troops to their December 2004 positions, Grum's answer was that Ethiopia would not be caught in Isaias' game.

14. (C) COMMENT: My recommendation is that we continue with the diplomatic initiatives outlined by DAS Yamamoto during his recent visit to Addis Ababa. END COMMENT  
HUDDLESTON